753 thunder, wind, or lightning. All the men
776 who occupy or have occupied cargos in the
[794] political or religious organization are sup-
[888] posed to have a nagual, as do the older
[613] members of the lineage. They consider it their duty to punish those members of the group who have sinned and use their nagual, who can devour the soul of the victim little by little.

774 According to this idea, everybody has two
776 souls: one which can be eaten by the naguales, and one which follows the destiny that its patron saint has planned for it.

761 When death comes, the naguales take away
775 the first soul and have a banquet up in the
776 mountains. In this feast, the naguales of the old people of the clan participate, joined by others induced to comradeship.

761 It is a widespread belief that at midyear
• 773 the naguales go to a place in heaven called
776 Atimaltik, where an old man who possesses the Book of Life lives. Since in this book he keeps account of the time each person can live, it is a source of information for the naguales, who thus can know who is close to death. When the signature of a person disappears from the book, this means that the person died.

764 People have to keep watch over the body for two days and two nights. It is placed on a wooden plank in the middle of the house after being washed or just given a change of clothes. Two candles are placed at the head. At night friends and neighbors come to keep company with the family. They play harp and guitar and drink chicha and aguardiente. At dawn, the men go home and the women remain crying near the corpse.

[613] Following the ancient custom, the dead
[184] are buried near the graves of other men of the same lineage. In Cancuc, however, dead are buried inside the house.

The bottom and sides of the grave are covered with slabs to form a coffin. The corpse, bundled up in a petate, is placed inside. His clothes and other articles he may

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

The four sides of the square house are protected by palm crosses which were nailed to each of the four corner posts during the ceremony of the initiation of the house. These crosses prevent the entry of evil. A fifth cross on the door post, replaced each year on the Day of the Cross, ensures the guardianship of San Pedro the Martyr, the Lord of Lightning.[5]

The idea of the similarity in substance between a house and its inmates originates in the notions about soil (*lum*) and mud (*ʔaẗ'al*). An origin myth concerning the creation of man indicates that God created man out of soil and this mythical identification is reiterated in prayers when the fleshy part of the body is referred to as *ẖlumeletik*, our soil, and *ẖaẗ'aletik*, our mud. Whatever soil man comes into contact with—in his house, in the backyard, or in his travels, may contain some of his soul. This belief is demonstrated in the following practices: When a person's soul is lost because of a fright, such as falling or "seeing a spirit," the soil where the incident occurred is scraped into a shirt or skirt belonging to him and deposited in the soil below the head of his bed. Some older informants say that the soil from beneath the bed is scraped up and deposited in the coffin of a deceased inmate of the house, but I have never seen this done. This intimate relation between soul and soil was best illustrated to us when our landlord refused to let us put a cement floor in the interior of his house since it would interfere with the practices described above and other customs in the house ceremonies mentioned below.

The house is constructed in two stages. The completion of each stage requires a ceremony linking the spirits of the inmates to that of the dwelling. The first stage is the erection of the house posts and the wooden frame. When the roof is covered with wood shingles, thatch, or tile, the family may set up temporary walls of boards. They wait until the rainy season to complete the second stage of building up the walls with mud. The first ceremony, called "fiesta for the house," is for "the spirit which resides in the posts," and the second, called "meal for the house," is to feed "the spirit of the house earth." People believe that the mud walls, like their fleshy counterpart, the human body, require nourishment.

5. San Pedro Martyr is referred to by the Indians as *Tatik Martil* and is identified with the pre-Conquest deity Lord of Lightning, or *Tatik Ča?uk*.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

waters. The curer brushes the patients with branches of the cooling bushes and herbs growing near the spring, the same ones used in the fiesta of inauguration and the curing ceremonies conducted in the house. The strategy of making the house spirit happy by providing music, dancing, and drinking is repeated at the spring to make the water spirit happy. Some of the family of the patient must remain in the house as "waiters" (*maliwanehetik*) to receive the spirit if it should arrive before its owner. The maliwanehetik must drink as much liquor as the participants at the spring.

The Cave of the Ancestors. The ancestors, the *me?tiktatik*, were believed to have lived in a cave in the hills lying on the peripheries of the township. In the myth that follows, they are given a historical identity as two brothers, the Shuntonetik. Shunton is one of the Tzeltal patronyms of families still living in the town, and in fact the narrator of this version of the myth is Mariano Shunton, whom people consider a descendant of the ancestors.[6]

Formerly a priest asked for a document to be delivered to Antigua in Guatemala. Two messengers were sent with it, but they did not return. Another messenger went and did not return. Four or five more messengers were sent out and did not come back. Finally they sent a man from the cabildo with his younger brother. They left early in the morning, and the elder brother said as he left the other town officials, "If I succeed, I want a fiesta. Look for my sign of four arches [rainbow]."

The two brothers first went to a hill. There they called upon their swayohelik [*animal spirits*]. *First the animal spirit of the elder brother spoke. He said, "I am a stone." Then the animal spirit of the younger brother said, "I am a stick. Moreover, I am a snake and a maguey plant." The elder brother said, "Then we are well off. Let us go."*

6. The same identification of a lineage patronym with the most important sacred hill is found in other Tzeltal- and Tzotzil-speaking communities (Holland 1963, Hermitte 1964). The pattern may have originated in a period of pre-Conquest expansion when the dominant lineage was assigned a custodial leadership over the new settlement, with their spirits remaining as guardians of the community. Members of the contemporary communities who bear the same patronym do not have any privileged position. These associations of past and contemporary belief are, as Vogt (1964:216) cautions, still hypothetical.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

773 778 539 769 *As the two brothers were walking, the elder brother said, "Do you see what that man is doing?" He was referring to a black man lying near the road. "He is sleeping," said the younger. The elder said, "Let us go on."*

They approached closer to the sleeping man. The elder brother said, "Let us pass." Just as they were passing, the black man said, "Where are you going? Come back! Come, enter here."

They entered a cave. The black man said, "Here you are going to die."

"So be it," said the elder.

"Put your head here," said the black man. He went to get his machete, but instead of hitting the head with it, he drove it into the great stone which was the elder brother's swayohel. "Ah, the devil, who are you?" he asked. Turning to the younger brother, he said, "Now it is your turn!"

The younger brother came, and the black man struck him with his machete. The machete broke.

"Now it is your turn, black man!" said the younger brother. The devil began to cry, "Go along, I will not trouble you." "Yes, you will always trouble us," said the elder brother. "I shall give you money," said the black man. "No, I have money," said the elder brother. "Then I shall carry you," said the black man. "I do not want that. You must die!" said the elder brother. "Come, boy [to his younger brother], cut a stick and make two points on each side. Stick it there and a wind will carry him aloft."

Then a snake came and settled right there where the stick was planted. The black man fell, and the stick entered his anus. It came out of his mouth and he died. The brothers cut off his head and brought it to Guatemala. They delivered the paper to the priest, who was very frightened.

"Which way have you come?" asked the priest. "We came along the road," answered the brothers.

"But didn't you see anyone?" asked the priest. "No one," answered the brothers. "But where did you really go?" asked the priest.

"Since you force us to answer, we did meet someone," answered the brothers, "covering the road where we passed midway. We brought him here."

"I want to see him," said the priest. The elder brother said, "Look, I brought him in this box. I cut off his head."

The priest looked, and when he saw the head, he cried. He ordered the

7t Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

703
708
539
769

soldiers to come and throw the Shunton brothers in jail. He ordered a meal brought to prison with a servant.

"I do not want it," said the elder brother and returned it with the servant. "Tell him [the priest] that I do not want it but thank him."

The servant told the priest that the brothers did not want the good meal.

"Good," said the priest. "If they don't eat in a little while they will be dead. Go leave them liquor so that they will not feel how they die."

"Good," said the servant. She went to the jail and said, "My master wants to know if you want to drink."

"I don't want any. I have some too. I brought a liter of trago." There they were drinking inside the prison.

At ten in the morning, they came to tie a blindfold on the brothers. They shot at them, but the bullet did not hit. They shot again, but it did not hit. "Who are these people?" asked the priest. "Send out another soldier!" The other began to fire, but the bullets did not hit the brothers. Many soldiers came out and fired, but the bullets did not hit them.

"Then," said the soldier, "you know what we shall do? We shall burn them in this hide."

"Good, go look for the hide. When the hide comes we will prepare it," said the priest.

They began to sew the hide. When they finished sewing, they began to throw wood and lit a fire. They waited until the fire started. They came to see the brothers. They were very drunk.

"Bring them here." said the priest. "Not yet. They are still drinking." But the priest answered, "They have drunk enough. Go bring them and we shall burn them."

On their second return, the fire began to burn the pueblo. The people began to cry. Half the pueblo was burned when the Lord of Lightning and Rain came. A shower hit the fire.

"Good," said the elder brother. "We have won. Now the fire is out and we shall go. Let us see if they are waiting for us in our town. If not, I know where we can find some pretty women in Chiapa."

"Good. Let us rest a little," said the younger brother.

"Good, I am thirsty. Let us go where there is water," said the elder.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

"Good."
They waited a while and the water came. "Are you going to drink?"
They drank, and then they made the sign of the rainbow. The president sent his síndico to meet them. The síndico got drunk on the way. He sat down halfway in the road. The brothers met him there. They were angry that a fiesta was not prepared for them. And for this they left town, and went to live in Chiapas.

This tale is known to everyone in town, and there is no doubt as to its authenticity expressed by those who have given versions of it. When I took some of the Indians on a trip to Guatemala, they pointed out the rocks where the brothers encountered the devil. When they arrived in Guatemala and saw a bus marked Antigua they expressed amazement that the town was still in existence.

Some people claim to have seen the ancestors, whom they describe as wearing the old style costume—a long shirt with the hat now worn by the alfereces. The ancestors are believed to have watched over the village from a mound rising abruptly before the mouth of the cave, called Hol Shan, or Head of Palm, because of the trees growing on it (Plate 1). From this eminence they could watch the streets of the village and see whether anyone was trying to bring in evil (Plate 2). They were able to discern the power of evil in the souls of the newborn and could snatch the soul before its possessor grew up to cause evil. Their human agents in guarding the town against evil were the curers (*ʔuʔuletik*), who in the context of guardianship were called *meʔiltatil*.[7]

Each year on the Day of the Cross, May 3d in the Catholic calendar,[8] a fiesta is held in honor of the ancestors. It refers back to the fiesta which ought to have been held for the returning Shuntonetik, and is performed in the interest of the whole community as a means of ensuring good relations with the ancestors.

Formerly the curers were responsible for conducting this fiesta. An informant recalled the ritual:

7. The guardianship role of the curers is related to the functions of pre-Conquest officials, called *ghcanalum*, "caretakers of the soil" (Calnek 1962:25).

8. The date of the Day of the Cross was changed by the Vatican in 1964. When the local priest tried to reschedule the fiesta in the community, he encountered strong opposition. The Indians continue to celebrate the Day of the Cross on May 3d.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

The curers used to go up to the cave with the alfereces, the mayordomos *[religious officials], the prayer reciters, and the people of the village. When they arrived there, the mayordomos played the guitar and gourd rattle. They lit candles and incense, and the leading curers would go inside the cave. All the people contributed money for the liquor and candles which was collected by the officials. They said that they spoke to the ancestors inside, where there was a lake and a beautiful field. They asked for rain and good crops. They would come out and tell the people waiting outside what the ancestors had said.*

Then one year [in 1957] during the fiesta of the cave, the curers went into the cave. The people said to the curers, "We want to see the owners." The curers said they would come out, but they didn't. The people waited and waited. A boy went inside with the curers. They tried to prevent him, saying, "Won't you be afraid?" He said, "No, let's go in." They entered twenty feet inside the door. The curers said, "Let us stay here." The boy asked them where was the river, the lake, and the milpa that were supposed to be inside. The curer replied, "It is all a lie. Now you know; don't tell the people." But when he came out, the boy told the people it was all a deception.

Since the late 1950s the ritual has changed. The curers no longer officiate, nor do they enter the cave and speak to the ancestors as they did formerly. The *fiscal,* or assistant to the priest, leads the mayordomos, alferreces, and prayer-reciters to the cave on the Day of the Cross and simply replace the palm cross at the entrance to the cave just as they do with the palm crosses fixed to the wooden crosses marking the roads leading into the town. The curers have attempted to revive the belief in the presence of the ancestors by saying that their nephew is in residence now, but no one I ever spoke to believes this. Most people agree that the ancestors live permanently in Chiapa de Corso.[9]

The hill and cave owners. While people try to maintain a good relationship with the spirits of the house, of the springs, and of the Cave of the Ancestors, they avoid the dangerous spirits of the hills and caves

9. A similar myth concerning the departure of the ancestors to go live in Chiapa de Corzo exists in Pinola (Hermitte 1964).

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

mother the Moon gets angry. This might cause an eclipse of the moon, and the crops will suffer because there will be no sun.

There is no prohibition, however, against having sexual relations prior to planting or at other crucial stages, as there are for other Maya Indians (Wagley 1941:34).

During the growing season, candles are lit in the milpa as protection against wind as well as robbers, who "lose their luck" when this is done.

The spirits' care of the crops. The crops have souls, given by the spirits, which will be lost if they are not cared for. The spirits "watch over the crops as parents watch over their children." The term for seed (*yal*) is a metaphorical extension of the term for "child of a woman."

The following myths give different, occasionally contradictory versions of the origin of crops. This central truth emerges in all of them: The spirits have given us our crops and will continue to do so as long as we offer thanks in the form of ceremonies and gifts to them.

Santo Tomás [the patron saint of Oxchuk] had intercourse with Santa Lucía. She wanted [asked for] *the soul of corn, and he gave her the seed of corn. Then there came forth beans, corn, and wheat. But then all the saints of San Bartolo and San Miguel [neighboring towns] asked for the soul of corn. Then the soul of beans left us and went to hot country. Now it does not grow well in the pueblo. Also, the avocado has gone to Comitán. The matasano and ground beans went to Oxchuk when Santa Lucía fought with Santo Tomás.*

The myth of the origin of crops overlays an older myth which has parallels in other groups of Maya-speaking Indians (Castro 1965, Wagley 1941:20).

Formerly, during a famine, there was hunger. The tzisim, *an insect of Ariola, came to take the corn from underground. Thus the ancestors got their first seed. For this reason, people say that corn was born underground, brought up by the tzisim. But I believe God sent us corn.*

Another version has synthesized the role of the saints and that of the animal agent.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Chapter 12

Ordering Behavior by Time

The structuring of social acts depends upon shared understandings about how others use time as well as space. Scheduling of activities in the daily and annual cycles minimizes decision-making by individuals and provides a set of expectations that facilitates cooperation.

The Sense of Time

The abstract noun for time, *k'alal,* is derived from the word for day, *k'al.* Time began when k'oĭ, the youngest son of Our Grandmother the Moon, took the sun from his elder brother and carried it around the world so that there was a succession of day and night (Chapter 8). Time past, (*name?il*), is a general state of being in which the ancestors lived. The future is at best a recapitulation of the past.

People judge time by the position of the sun during the day, and by that of the moon or the stars at night. In winter, the appearance of the group of stars called "the sandal" and in summer of the "seven stars" indicates two o'clock in the morning. The appearance of Venus, called "the big star," announces the arrival of dawn.

In addition to these natural indicators, there are three timepieces in the town—in the school, the parish house, and the store. In the morning the policemen check the time with the lay sisters or the schoolmaster before mounting the tower of the church to strike the bell at eight o'clock, the time for rounding up the schoolchildren, at noon, the time for closing the town hall and the church, and at five in the afternoon, the time for evening prayers.

Despite bells and nature, however, people are not very accurate in calcu-

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Moon" will not give way to the sun if her envy is aroused by seeing such things. These spirits of the heavens have greater control over natural forces than the spirits of the church, or saints. The saints have only limited influence over the souls of particular crops and chickens; people say "they are just of the pueblo."

The distinction between the "big saints of the church" and the lesser saints is recognized in the rituals accorded each group. Four of the saints are given big fiestas which are longer, require more expenditures, and involve more people than the fiestas for the lesser saints. Few distinctions are made between the personalities of the big saints and those of the lesser saints. They are big because their fiestas are big. The fact that the townspeople have selected four from the rostrum of saints given them suggests a link with the four guardian gods of the pre-Conquest pantheon, but except for San Pedro the Martyr's identification with Chac, or Cha'uk in Tzeltal, I could not make any other associations.

To say that there is a system of beliefs does not rule out inconsistencies. Some contradictions can coexist without giving rise to tension. Awareness of incongruence either between beliefs, or between beliefs and behavior associated with them, arises in specific events in which the conflict becomes apparent—that is, when the participants must make choices between alternatives that affect their interests.

The people do not recognize any division between pre- and post-Conquest spiritual entities. Sometimes two personalities from Catholic sources may be equated with one of pre-Conquest origin in order to fit a story format, as in the case of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, with K'oš (Chapter 8). The priests, who had a special dispensation to make whatever cultural translations were necessary in teaching the doctrines of the church (Doctrina Cristiana Lima 1584 III, 3, Recopilación de Leyes, Ley 22 lib. cited in Lamb 1956:531), are responsible for some of the reworking of the two traditions. But local elaborations reveal indigenous cognitive patterning.

Contradictions in myths concerning the origin of crops show some gaps in the union of pre-and post-Conquest legends. The gift of corn is attributed in one myth to the patroness, Santa Lucía, who received it from the patron saint of the neighboring town of Oxchuk. Another myth gives

credit to insects who carried it from the hills. Still another myth synthesizes both pre-Conquest and Catholic agents: San Antonio, seeing an insect bearing a kernel of corn, persuaded a woodpecker to break open the rock which blocked the entrance to the hill where the corn was stored and then organized the insects to bring forth the corn. The contradictions in these myths do not motivate the people to bring the several versions into line with one another because the rituals associated with beliefs concerning crops provide an overall insurance rather than a specific contract. The Indians do not trust their security to any one saint or even group of deities. The two candles lit in the milpa following the harvest are an offering to the "owner of the earth"; along with this, offerings of corncobs are made to the saints in the church and to the house saint. Even the birds are left an offering of corn kernels in the fields after the harvest so that they will not be jealous of the farmer.

These myths fail to provide specific charters for action. What they do provide is a set of dispositions to behave in certain ways. The underlying disposition is that of self-imposed guilt and recrimination. The ancestors left their cave because the people failed to give them a fiesta; the spirit of money left the town because the religious officials in the past failed to adorn the church and improvidently strewed the floor with green peso notes in place of pine needles. Sickness and poverty are attributed to their own failures.

Another disposition is that of appeasement through ceremonial entertainment. This is carried out in the fiestas for the spirits of the church and the spirits of the heaven just as for the spirits of the house, caves, springs, and hills surrounding the town. Community-wide disaster is interpreted as a direct result of failure to perform rituals establishing reciprocity with the spirits. When individuals face crop loss, they review their own ritual obligations to see what went wrong. The curing ceremony is another effort to appease the devil whom the witch has persuaded to give illness to his victim.

A third such disposition is to project human conflict into the supernatural sphere. The conflict between Santa Lucía and the patron saint of Oxchuk, Santo Tomás was taken to be the reason for the church tower being